

Canto, Guitarra y Fusil: Music production practices, internal order and the external legitimation of the FARC-EP

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Abstract

How do armed groups legitimise themselves in the eyes of their constituents and possible adherents? What is the role of cultural production in the legitimation of armed groups? Recent attention to rebel governance underscores how selective incentives, the mobilisation of different symbolic resources and social practices contribute to an armed group's legitimacy. However, little attention has been given to how these actors legitimise their authority through cultural practices, despite the clear importance rebels place on developing a distinct culture. This paper investigates the role of music production as a particular cultural practice with important implications for rebel legitimacy. It argues that music production is a practice that contributes to the legitimacy of armed groups internally, by reproducing existing relations of domination, and externally by conveying claims that armed groups are rightful challengers to the established order and represents the will of the population. The article applies the relational approach to armed groups legitimacy to music production in the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo* (FARC-EP). It shows that internally, FARC-EP music production is used to reproduce the legitimate authority of the leadership and make fighters internalise the group social order. Externally, music production propagates the belief that the armed group offers a legitimate vision of the social order in contrast to established elites and can talk on behalf of different groups within Colombian society.

Introduction

In June 2017, an artistic delegation of the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo* [Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People’s Army] (FARC-EP) named the Manuel Marulanda Art School took part in the annual *San Pedro* festivities in Neiva, Colombia. The delegation included a dance troupe as well as a band called *Los Rebeldes del Sur* [The Rebels of the South], both composed of FARC-EP ex-combatants demobilised during the ongoing peace process. In different events and parades, the artists displayed a banner reading “Our only weapon will be art”, mirroring the group’s commitment to abandon armed violence and legitimising its transition into legality. While the outcome of the peace process remains uncertain, this particular manifestation of armed group culture is an interesting example of different ways by which rebels legitimise their message. This article hence asks the questions: How do armed groups legitimise themselves in the eyes of their constituents and possible adherents? What is the role of cultural production in the legitimization of armed groups?

Recent attention to rebel governance (Terpstra and Frerks 2017; Stewart 2018) underscores how selective incentives (Weinstein 2007), the mobilisation of different symbolic resources (Malthaner 2015; Seymour 2017) and social practices (Duyvesteyn 2017; Mampilly 2015; Schlichte and Schneckener 2015) contribute to an armed group’s legitimacy. Yet, little attention has been given to cultural practices, despite the clear importance rebels place on developing a distinct culture (see Bolívar Ramírez 2017; Hegghammer 2017; Mampilly 2015). I bridge this gap by investigating the role of cultural production in armed groups’ legitimization, specifically the role of music.

The paper argues that culture, generally, and music production more specifically, is a practice that rebel groups use to enhance their legitimacy. Cultural practices are used in order to bolster armed group legitimacy internally, by reproducing existing relations of domination between the leadership and fighters, and externally by positioning the armed group as a rightful alternative to the established order and by conveying the belief that it represents the will of the people. The article draws on the relational approach to armed group legitimacy in order to analyse music production practices and discourses in the FARC-EP. Given the apparent importance of *Fariano*¹ culture in the FARC-EP’s identity and propaganda (Bolívar Ramírez 2017; Quishpe 2019), this particular armed group is an illustrative case that enhances our understanding of the ways armed groups legitimise themselves and the role of culture in these practices. The topic has implications for the literature on the cultural dimensions of rebel legitimization and governance (see Duyvesteyn 2017; Hegghammer 2017; Hoffman 2015; Mampilly 2015; Schlichte and Schneckener 2015).

Legitimacy, Culture and Music in Research on Armed Groups

Authors have underlined the importance of myths, beliefs and practices in how armed groups legitimise their internal order, position themselves in relations to the dominant political order and relate to civilians (see Förster 2015; Hegghammer 2017; Hoffman 2015; Mampilly 2015; Schlichte 2009; Schneckener 2017). Building on this work below, I suggest how a relational approach to legitimacy can enhance understanding on the place of culture, music and social practices in bolstering armed group legitimacy.

¹ The terms *Fariano* and *Fariana* refer to an adjective meaning “of the FARC-EP.”

Culture and the Relational Approach to Legitimacy

Most students of political violence consider such phenomenon to be instrumentally used by actors in their endeavour to accomplish different political and military goals (Valentino 2014). Yet, such rationalist perspectives struggle to explain the important role of cultural practices in armed groups. As Thomas Hegghammer (2017, 1–2) argues in discussing jihadist movements, utility-maximizing fighters should “spend all their time honing their bomb-making skills, raising funds, or studying the enemy’s weaknesses. Yet they “waste” time on poetry recitation, hymn singing, and other activities that serve no apparent strategic purpose. And it is not just that they do it - they do it *a lot*, which suggests it is significant to their whole enterprise.” Music has played an important role in movements as varied as the Palestinian resistance (Salih and Richter-Devroe 2014), White Power groups in the United States (Futrell, Simi, and Gottschalk 2006) as well as the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone (Nuxoll, 2015) and jihadist groups (Lahoud 2017). This suggests that music, as a cultural practice, is an important aspect of social mobilisation. Previous studies focus on different practices legitimising armed groups, but little is known about the role of specific cultural practices in the legitimation of their internal and external order. Research on music and cultural practices in armed groups can provide interesting insights in that regard (see Brenner, 2018; Hegghammer, 2017) but the limited number of empirical applications restricts our understanding of the role of such practices.

Cultural Practices, Legitimacy and Order

Scholars have underlined the need to study armed groups legitimacy from a sociological and relational perspective building on the work of Max Weber and his ideal type of different forms of domination (see Duyvesteyn 2017; Podder 2017; Schlichte 2009) as well as Pierre Bourdieu’s conceptualisation of power (Schlichte and Schneckener 2015). A relational perspective focuses on “the practices and relations constituting how legitimacy is constructed during conflict” (Podder 2017, 687). An armed actor is considered legitimate to the extent that enough people believe in the actions and *raison d’être* of the group and/or the political order it promotes, no matter if this is due to the charisma of the leaders, the traditional authority it embodies or the legal-rational legitimacy of its institutions (Schneckener 2017). In that regard, Schlichte and Schneckener (2015, 413) define legitimacy as “the belief in the justification or the moral validity of a political organization and its activities [that can exist] both within that organization and outside its boundaries.”

Internally, armed group legitimacy takes its root in a set of social and cultural practices and norms that constitute the group as a distinctive community. Armed groups’ support does not rest solely on the logics of violence and coercion but also on “individual, personal and emotional rewards for militant activists, such as recognition by peers, social prestige in local communities, etcetera” (Malthaner 2015, 431). Cultural practices such as musical production can play a role in the legitimation of rebel groups internally by the reproduction of hierarchical relations of domination between leaders and fighters. As an example, in armed organisations, military marches, salutes and songs contribute to the recognition of the domination of commanders over their subalterns. Music, as a specific manifestation of armed group culture, can also make fighters bond together emotionally, help them construct and perform a common rebel identity, raise their political consciousness and mobilise them for war (Brenner 2018; Lahoud 2017; Nuxoll 2015; Quishpe 2019). Concretely, this means that music production can entrench the power of the existing leadership, reinforce cohesion, and aid with recruitment and retention.

Externally, armed groups base their legitimacy on their ability to construct a distinct order through their relations with the state and the civilian population (Arjona 2017; Kasfir 2015; Podder 2017; Schneckener 2017; Staniland 2012). Rebels legitimise the subversion of state power by constructing a state-like authority drawing on cultural symbols of sovereignty such as flags, anthems, alternative banknotes, and war memorials (Mampilly 2015). Such dynamic is also present in Mexican drug cartels who use cultural and music production in order to position themselves in relations to other cartels, the public and the state (Campbell 2014). Music production therefore enables the group to position the authority of their leadership as a legitimate alternative to established elites.

The constitution of a rebel order implies that such actors must legitimise their rule over the civilian population beyond the raw use of violence and coercion (Arjona 2017; Podder 2017; Schlichte 2009; Stewart 2018; Terpstra and Frerks 2017). As armed actors gain control over territory, they may for instance provide security, justice and other types of service provision (Kasfir 2015; Stewart 2018). Culture can contribute to the constitution of such alternative political order by embedding the rebels' political messages in pre-existing cultural values and belief nurturing the very legitimacy needed to assert domination over the civilian population (Hoffman 2015; Mampilly 2015). For instance, revolutionary music and karaoke has played an important role in revitalizing the Kachin independence movement in Myanmar by connecting the movement to urban youths and becoming a medium for the grievances of the Kachin population (Brenner 2018). Cultural production can therefore play a role in constituting a group from which armed group leaders can derive the mandate power to speak on its behalf (Bourdieu 1991, 213–14).

The FARC-EP Case Study and Research Material

The research draws on the FARC-EP, a peasant based Marxists-Leninist guerrilla that has sustained the longest insurgency in Latin America (see Leech 2011). The FARC-EP takes its roots in peasant self-defence organisations formed during *la Violencia*, a civil war opposing the Liberal and Conservative parties taking place in 1945-1958. In 1964, the Colombian government attempted to take control of a Communist party administered peasant enclave formed during the war. Manuel Marulanda and his militiamen resisted the attack and regrouped in what would later become the FARC. The guerrilla became the strongest armed group in Colombia reaching 2000 members in 1990, 8000 in 1990 and 17 000 in 2000 (Pécaut 2006, 15). Two peace processes in the 1980's and 1998-2000 failed to bring peace. Under the government of Álvaro Uribe Vélez (2002-2010), the increase in the military capacity of the state lead to major territorial retreat of the group. In 2012, the FARC-EP entered in peace negotiations with the Juan Manuel Santos government and an agreement was reached by 2016. In October 2016, the approval of the accord was put to a vote in a popular referendum and a successful campaign led by former president Álvaro Uribe Vélez resulted in its rejection. Eventually, a revised version was adopted by the Colombian Congress in November 2016, initiating the transformation of the guerrilla into a legal political party. The FARC-EP is an interesting case to understand the interrelation between music and the politics of legitimacy. Music has played an important role in connecting the armed group with regional communities and national history and constituting the FARC-EP “guerrillas as a distinctive and meaningful armed community” (Bolívar Ramírez 2017, 211). Also, the peace process provides a fascinating development that can shed light on how armed groups legitimise themselves in relation to other political actors in contested transitions.

I aim to grasp ways by which music production is used to legitimise the rebel group internally and externally. The empirical section draws from FARC-EP handbooks, military codes of conduct, interviews and testimonies posted on the armed group websites, blogs and other news sources, as well as secondary material. The article also includes insights from personal observations during FARC-EP performances at the *San Pedro* festivities in Neiva in June 2017 and informal encounters with FARC-EP artists. Furthermore, the analysis draws from songs that were all produced by FARC-EP combatants, including artists like Black Esteban, Julián Conrado, Christian Pérez, Lucas Iguarán, Martín Batalla, and bands like *Los Rebeldes del Sur*, *Horizonte Fariano* [*Fariano Horizon*] and *Los Compañeros* [The Companions]. The songs were found through diverse *YouTube* accounts affiliated with the FARC-EP or sharing its material. I compiled and analysed all the songs that were accessible online totalling 258 songs spanning productions from 1988 to 2017, the timeframe in which the guerrilla produced its first record until the most recent songs. FARC-EP artists having produced close to 500 songs throughout the guerrilla's history (Quishpe 2019), the sample represents an illustrative outlook of the group's musical production. The exact production date for some of the songs were not found but it was possible to estimate the period by referring to other sources or the song lyrics². For instance, songs by Christian Pérez were all written before 2007 as this fighter died in combat that year. Julián Conrado was captured and imprisoned in Venezuela in 2011 permitting to establish approximately when certain songs were written.

Analysis: Making Sense of the FARC-EP Music Production

During the war, the FARC-EP put into place the “insurgent cultural hour” where members of the armed group would meet to watch movies, read poetry, and perform stand-up comedy, theatrical acts and music (Batalla in *Noticiero Barrio Adentro* 2017; Salgari 2014, 184). Some *guerrilleros* also constructed underground compartments so that musicians could practice on the frontline without being spotted (Forero in Maldonado Tovar 2016). The FARC-EP also dedicates special sections of its official websites on *Fariano* music and promotes culture through affiliated news agencies and *YouTube* channels. Musical production seems to be an important part of the life of the guerrilla that may in fact have a role to play in its legitimisation.

Music Production and Internal Order

The FARC-EP is known for being a vertically organised guerrilla that relies on the internalisation of the group norms, routines and practices for internal discipline in addition to punishment for reprehensible behaviour (Gutiérrez Sanín 2008). In this context, cultural practices can convey the belief that the rule of commanders is legitimate and make fighters internalise the groups' social order.

The leadership and the reproduction of internal relations of domination

The FARC-EP leadership has been very enthusiastic to the idea of creating a distinct guerrilla musical repertoire and was involved in orienting artistic production (Agencia Bolivariana de Prensa 2017; CRB-Voz de la Resistencia 2007; FARC-EP 2008). In an interview with a news source associated with the group, Julián Conrado, one of the most known FARC-EP singers, recalls his time in a school for cadres with the leadership. Conrado notes that Jacobo Arenas, one of the top ideological leaders of the group, told him that the way he was performing his art could contribute a lot to the development of their revolutionary movement and that he should dedicate

² The years of production are included in the song references. No date (n.d.) is inscribed when the date is unknown.

himself to singing (Agencia Bolivariana de Prensa 2017). In 1988-1989, Conrado and Lucas Iguarán, both from the 19th front, produced *Mensaje Fariano* [*Fariano Message*], the first album of the FARC-EP. The project was an initiative of Adán Izquierdo, the commander of the front and Jacobo Arenas oriented the recording notably by financing the project (CRB-Voz de la Resistencia 2007). Those episodes highlight that the experience of being an artist is deemed relevant within the armed group hierarchy thus enabling the incorporation of music production as a constitutive practice of the FARC-EP.

The FARC-EP Secretariat seem to have great influence over when music should be produced and to what end. There is a certain common understanding between the FARC-EP leadership and guerrilla artists on what music should do for the group. For instance, talking about the production of *Mensaje Fariano*, Lucas Iguarán highlights that after consulting with Adán Izquierdo and Julián Conrado, they came to the conclusion that the album would convey a message for the struggle of the people (CRB-Voz de la Resistencia 2007). Furthermore, Iguarán's second album *Para mi Pueblo* [For my People] came from an initiative of the Secretariat in 1991 after the death of commander Jacobo Arenas. Iguarán notes that at that time he did not have any songs but "it had to be done" (CRB-Voz de la Resistencia 2007). This quote shows how artistic production is seen as a practice that does not emerge from the sole impulse of the artist but is embedded within the hierarchical logic of the group. The particular moment at which the album was produced also highlights how songs can be used to construct the charismatic figures of leadership members.

The belief that Secretariat members are the legitimate leaders of the group is disseminated through FARC-EP musical discourse. First of all, any criticism of the leadership or the internal order of the guerrilla is absent in all the songs analysed. Singers notably recognise the personal symbolic power of Secretariat members by saluting them at the beginning of their songs. This is apparent in several songs such as *Picadito por la Paz* [Football Game for Peace] by *Los Rebeldes del Sur* (2016), *A Bolivariar* by Julián Conrado (2012 [2005]) and *Colombia o Nada* [Colombia or Nothing] by Lucas Iguarán (2011 [2000]) amongst others. Several songs are formulated as tributes to prominent figures of the movement. Manuel Marulanda and Jacobo Arenas, two of the founding members of the FARC-EP, are praised for their warrior credentials and for tracing the path that *guerrilleros* should follow (see Conrado 2009 [n.d.]; Iguarán 2016 [1995]). The charisma given to deceased leaders can also be transferred onto current elites. For instance, in the song *Canto a Jacobo* [Song to Jacobo], Lucas Iguarán (2016 [1995]) recalls how Jacobo Arenas, who died in 1990, had the blood of the people in his veins. In a section of the song, the charisma of Arenas is symbolically transferred to Timoleón Jimenez, Middle Magdalena commander and member of the Secretariat as Iguarán sings: "Timoleón Jimenez the future will be ours." The reference to both deceased and current Secretariat members provides a sense of continuity in the leadership.

The heroic charisma of FARC-EP leaders is often mobilised in order to legitimise the internal command structure. For instance, in a song dedicated to the deceased commander Jorge Briceño who died in 2010, Anderley Sanchez (2017 [n.d.]) emphasises that *guerrilleros* should follow his legacy by abiding to the internal rules designed by him:

Forming new rules that help to lead
Together with the majorities that constitute the country
Statutes, regulations, codes of conduct of the FARC
If we apply these things, they will never hit us.

The extract portrays how Briceño's guidelines are essential for leadership by mentioning that he created them with the majorities of the country and that, if applied, they can insure protection

against FARC-EP enemies. The song thus attributes a particular value to internal rules of the group by building on the charisma of Briceño. This logic provides a sense that the hierarchical order is natural. It conveys the message that following the rules equates to placing one's security in the hands of commanders. The current commanders being the "heirs" of Briceño and applying such procedures, the discourse relayed by the song aims to reinforce their authority as competent leaders.

The internalisation of the FARC-EP social order

In order to retain their internal legitimacy armed organisations must make sure that members accept the authority of their superior. In the FARC-EP, cultural production is not merely entertainment but also follows the fundamental function of constituting the FARC-EP as a political community (Quishpe 2019). For instance, the *Code of open order of the FARC-EP* underlines that parties have goals that are more elevated than drinking, dancing etcetera but:

Must relate to great political acts, be in accordance with the political situation on the national level as well as the internal life of the guerrilla. Every action must not be the product of improvisation by anybody, [but be subject to] a good planning that corresponds with the present and future (FARC-EP n.d.).

Moreover, cultural production and education through culture is part of fighters' wider duties which implies that music has a fundamental role to play in the social and ideological cohesion of the group (Bolívar Ramírez 2017; Quishpe 2019). The *FARC-EP Statute* delineating the rights and duties of FARC-EP members outlines that combatants must "make permanent efforts to excel in the political, cultural and military fields" (FARC-EP 2007, 13). Music produced by the group has had the function to make fighters internalise its political message. For instance, combatants and urban militants listened to songs "to strengthen the ideological guidelines of the organization and to tune in with the values of the [group]" (Quishpe 2018). In the same vein, Martín Batalla (in *Noticiero Barrio Adentro* 2017), a FARC-EP rapper/reggae singer, tells that guerrilla festivities are considered cultural political acts. Those gatherings occur on the day of foundation of the FARC-EP or the day of the heroic guerrilla fighter, for instance, and include choreographed dances and military marches as one can see in videos posted by the armed group (FARC-EP 2012, 2016; see also Salgari, 2014: 185).

FARC-EP music production also present different rites of passage and moments in the life of the guerrilla in ways that new recruits and members can relate to. In the song *La Cartilla* [The Code of Conduct], Christian Pérez (2013 [n.d.]) emphasizes how the training and the initiation to combat make fighters become patriots of the insurrection. In *Guerrillero Nuevo* [New Guerrilla Fighter], he also claims that entering the ranks is like having a family in the insurrection (Pérez 2016b [n.d.]). Integration in the FARC-EP is also associated to the construction of a new man in line with Marxist-Leninist ideology stating: "Now that you are in the guerrilla, it is well distinct the situation, you feel that a new man is germinating, like a spring in your heart" (Pérez 2016b [n.d.]). The emphasis on the new family in the group and the transformation of recruits into new persons seem important from the perspective of socialisation since FARC-EP recruits often have to cut ties with their family for security reasons and internal discipline (Gutiérrez Sanín 2008, 17). Songs thus provide a positive image of the life in the guerrilla, despite its harsh conditions, to make new combatants accept commanders' authority.

FARC-EP music conveys messages that intent to motivate rank-and-file soldiers into combat. Songs like *Pa' la Ofensiva me Voy* [To the Offensive I Go] by Christian Pérez (2016c [n.d.]) and *Pa'lante la Marcha* [Forward the March] by Julián Conrado (2015b [n.d.]) both relate how going to combat with the FARC-EP will lead to victory against different forms of oppression.

Such songs elevate one's personal sacrifice to the group's emancipatory goals. The FARC-EP legitimises the power of commanders over fighters and motivates troops and possible adherents for combat based on the idea that the group continues the struggle for the liberation of Latin America instigated by revolutionaries such as Simon Bolívar, Che Guevara and Fidel Castro. The song, *Canto, Guuitarra y Fusil* [Song, Guitar and Rifle], by *Horizonte Fariano* (2010) is illustrative in that regard:

I am ready to give my life if necessary
Fulfilling my duty to be a revolutionary
It was Bolívar and the Che, those who gave the example
To seek that happiness that peoples long for

This extract implies that the singers' revolutionary duty, embedded in previous struggles, rationalise the fact they will follow orders and might die in combat. Furthermore, in the song *Vivo Feliz Luchando* [I Live Happy Fighting], *Horizonte Fariano* (2008b) underlines that "I live happy fighting, I am a *guerrillero*, Jacobo, I want to follow his steps, become a new man in combat be the first always fighting for the truth." In this extract, the charisma of Jacobo Arenas is used as a way to legitimise the fact that people follow the guerrilla in combat. In both extracts, the singers tacitly legitimise the belief of the internal legitimacy of the group order by acknowledging how the goals of the armed group are their particular interests.

Music Production and External Legitimacy

Music in the FARC-EP conveys the belief in the external legitimacy of the organisation and its struggle. It does so by positioning the FARC-EP in relation to the dominant political order and asserting the group's symbolic domination over the population.

Taking position and the FARC-EP political struggle

The interconnection between musical production and politics underpins that such practice is relevant to impose the FARC-EP's worldview on politics. The launch of different albums come at moments when the leadership has to legitimise its strategy to reverse the established order. Throughout current and prior peace processes, the FARC-EP organised series of concerts to promote *Fariano* culture (Estado Mayor Central de las FARC-EP 2017; Bolívar Ramírez 2017). Furthermore, the album *Mensaje Fariano*, comes after the failed experiment of the FARC-EP in electoral politics. The FARC-EP and the Communist party formed a political party named the *Unión Patriótica* (UP) in 1985 as part of a peace process with the Belisario Betancur government. UP candidates were systematically assassinated by paramilitaries and members of the security forces. The FARC left the UP and returned to armed violence in 1987. The release of *Mensaje Fariano* in 1988-1989 hence has to be understood within the context of a renewal of the armed conflict and the legitimation of the group's return to arms.

Art is seen as an integral part of the struggle or as Julián Conrado puts it bluntly, "There is no revolution without songs, without poetry, without painting" (Agencia Bolivariana de Prensa 2017). Other members also replicate this particular belief that musical production is a tool to legitimise the subversive goals of the group. Róbinson Forero, member of *Los Rebeldes del Sur*, notes that Manuel Marulanda

Understood that the war and the revolutionary struggle are not carried out solely with rifles, bombs and shootings if not, through propaganda and culture. He said that with our music we could reach where we could not with our weapons (in Maldonado Tovar 2016).

Art and politics being closely related, musical instruments are not merely conceived as means for entertainment but represent symbols of rebellion. For instance, the songs *La Guitarra y el Fusil* [The Guitar and the Rifle] by Julian Conrado (2015a [n.d.]), and *Canto, Guitarra y Fusil* by *Horizonte Fariano* (2010), present guitars as equal to rifles in advancing FARC-EP objectives. Guerrilla fighters are, for instance, said to be using their guitars to advance a socialist society (Horizonte Fariano 2010; Pérez 2016a [n.d.]). Guitars and rifles therefore embody FARC-EP's vision of politics by symbolising a particular cleavage which distinguishes between legitimate actors (FARC-EP) who fight for an alternative order (socialism) and other illegitimate actors defending the established power (the Colombian government).

In several songs, the FARC-EP positions itself as the actor on the right side of Colombian history thus legitimising the redefinition of the political order. For instance, Simón Bolívar, a hero of the independence of Colombia against Spanish rule, is probably the most central figure to the FARC-EP legitimisation discourse. The name of Bolívar is often mentioned in names of songs and albums to emphasise how the armed group continues the anti-imperialist legacy of the Latin-American liberator. Lucas Iguarán notably released an album called *Con Bolívar a la Carga* [Charging with Bolívar]. The word Bolívar is also used to form neologisms which legitimise the FARC-EP struggle. In the song *A Bolivariar*, Julián Conrado (2012 [2005]) transforms the name Bolívar into a verb. *A Bolivariar* means to organise for the struggle, it is a conviction, an insurgent and revolutionary thought. The appropriation of the legacy of Bolívar thus positions the FARC-EP as the legitimate liberator of Colombia and Latin America. In other words, in the group's vision of politics, the FARC-EP has legitimate authority since it distinguishes itself from those who do not carry the legacy of Latin American liberation.

In its musical discourse, the FARC-EP develops a vision of society that, based on a particular interpretation of the writings of Marx, divides the world into social classes. This division positions the FARC-EP order as legitimate over established "bourgeois" elites. Throughout several songs, the government is presented as an illegitimate class enemy whose interests are subordinated to the *yaqui* oppressor (USA). Several songs present current elites as an oligarchy and stress that the armed group is a legitimate alternative that can establish real democracy and socialism. During the height of the conflict with the Álvaro Uribe Vélez Government between 2002 and 2010, the FARC-EP launched songs about the president. The song *Puya antiuribista* by Julián Conrado (2016 [n.d.])³ portrays Uribe as a terrorist, a fascist and a *paraco*, an expression to denote somebody associated with right-wing paramilitaries. Conrado supports that the interests of the Colombian government are subordinated to those of the United States and calls upon the people to rise and the soldiers of the military to stop defending the interests of a foreign power. The song *Para Uribe* by *Horizonte Fariano* (2008a) reproduces a similar message with wordplays revolving around the word *para* which can either mean 'for' or 'paramilitary'. The group claims that Uribe protects the paramilitaries so that people remain silent and that the Senate approves laws so that right-wing groups never stop killing. This positioning of the FARC-EP underlines how the group sees Colombian political institutions as illegitimate and calls to redefine the political order through force. The FARC-EP constructs the worldview that on the one side, the right-wing illegitimate elites, armed groups and institutions, and, on the other, the legitimate, socialist forces. Such (de)legitimising discourse is also present in music the FARC-EP released when entering in peace negotiations in 2012. The song *Nos vamos pa la Habana* [we are going to Havana] by *Horizonte*

³ It was not possible to retrieve the exact date of production, but the song lyrics clearly suggest that it was written during the Uribe presidency.

Fariano (2013) notably discredits the government for saying that the FARC-EP lied about its intentions to make peace. The government and the USA are presented as the “bourgeois” who were searching for the fighters but could not defeat them, constructing those actors as enemies.

As the armed group committed to the peace process, it reoriented its positioning from the goal of defeating the state towards peace. For instance, a FARC-EP artist manager told me that, as the armed group experiences its last days as a guerrilla, its artists are performing art for peace. For him and other artists, producing music for peace does not mean the end of FARC-EP as a political movement. Black Esteban, a FARC-EP rapper argues that artistic production can help continue the political struggle as he emphasizes, “we are going to make a battle with words” (in *Noticiero Barrio Adentro* 2017). The division of the world according to the FARC-EP Marxist worldview remains an important aspect of the FARC-EP musical discourse, but the concept of peace as a principle of distinction becomes more important as the group disarms. It is by the constitution of such worldview that FARC-EP artists legitimise the authority of the former guerrilla. In the two parts song *Desenterrando Memorias* [Unearthing Memories] written during the peace process, Martín Batalla (2017a; 2017b) highlights that different events in Colombian history such as the Banana Massacre, the assassination of Gaitán and the *Plan Laso*, all testify of the intolerance and inclemency of the established power. For the author, this dreadful history dignifies the FARC-EP struggle. Sustaining an implicit Marxist reading of history, Batalla, (2017a; 2017b) underlines how massacres and episodes of political oppression of peasants and workers are re-enacted in a cyclical manner throughout Colombian history. Batalla underlines that the solution to the repetition of such cycles of violence resides in studying history, disarm politics and construct unity in a conscious mobilisation (Batalla 2017b). The discourse disseminated by Batalla still retains the FARC-EP Marxist worldview, but the fact that it provides disarming politics over the overthrow of the established order appears to show a certain commitment to institutional politics.

Musical production indicates a change of the FARC-EP positioning in relations to established elites. In several song, musicians underline the importance of “winning the peace” over military victory. For instance, above delegitimising established elites, recent songs written during the peace process treat the question of reconciliation (Black Esteban 2017) and peace (Los Rebeldes del Sur 2016; Téllez and León Cuartas 2017). In a metaphor, comparing the peace process with a football game, a singer from Los Rebeldes del Sur (2016) highlights how FARC-EP leaders Timoshenko and Iván Márquez and president Juan Manuel Santos are playing for peace and will make goals against the abomination of war. The song is insightful since it can be interpreted as a representation of the commitment of the FARC-EP to institutional politics. Yet, this also underlines that the armed group recognises their political opponents as “equal players” as well as the rules that constitute politics, symbolically represented by the football game. In another song, Black Esteban (2017), refers to the 2016 peace accord referendum where the peace deal was rejected. Esteban underlines that he aims to convince those who voted for the “no” and that all Colombians should unite for reconciliation and peace. The discourse dividing Colombia between those who want a peaceful resolution to the conflict on one side, including the FARC-EP and others who do not accept the peace process reflect how the peace process reshape the positioning of the FARC-EP. The notion of peace becomes a particular cleavage over which the new party distinguishes itself from other political contenders and legitimises its *raison d’être*.

The relation of the FARC-EP with civilians

The FARC-EP draws its legitimacy on the belief that it represents “the people”. The armed group notably uses music production to “tell stories, generate sympathies and foster solidarities”

in its encounters with the civilian population (Quishpe 2018). Furthermore, FARC-EP musicians reflect on their personal experiences and the situation in the country in order to reach to people who lived similar things. It is thus by constituting a group from which the FARC-EP derives its mandated power and embedding the guerrilla's message in pre-existing meanings that music production legitimises the groups' alternative order in relation to the civilian population.

In their musical production, FARC-EP artists often make claims that they incarnate the interests of the people, therefore making the FARC-EP its legitimate representative. Julián Conrado highlights that he is a “singer of the people” and that he symbolically represents its will as this quote underlines:

[The singers] of the people, in their state of nature, are the soul and the heart of the peoples and so we are the reflection of the desires of the people, of the problems of the people, well, of its sadness, of its joys, of the dreams of the people (NC - Nueva Colombia 2016).

Conrado thus clearly embodies the situation where the spokesperson gives voice to a group and derives its mandated power from it by making “I” mean “the people” (Bourdieu 1991, 211). Such claim is also reproduced in the song *Soy del Pueblo* [I am from the people] where Conrado (2016 [1989]) states “I take the floor, I speak for the people.” Conrado first derives his personal legitimacy as an artist from “the people” and secondly, and more implicitly, legitimises the FARC-EP as it is the institution he represents. The FARC-EP also aims to address the “oppressed masses” at large in its legitimising discourse. In the song *Invasión es su-misión* [Invasion Is Submission/His Mission], Martín Batalla (2017 [2009]) accuses the government of obliging people to shut up and that this is why his people is “bursting.” For Batalla, the invasion of Colombia by the United States legitimises that the people should arm itself and “prepare to assume its battle.” The FARC-EP is presented as the actor that can reverse the predicament of the oppressed masses therefore legitimising mobilisation for the group.

In order to disseminate the belief in the legitimacy of the armed group, musical production ought to be congruent with the lived experience of the people they claim to represent. Many of the songs produced by the FARC-EP consist in an ode to the marginalised population of Colombia, from which the FARC-EP claims to derive its power. Artists often refer to indigenous people and the afro-Colombian community but mostly to the peasant population in which the FARC-EP takes its roots. In several songs, FARC-EP songwriters make references to the language of the field notably by using the verb *sembrar* [to plant]. Guerrilla artists say that the FARC-EP is planting new seeds and is planting the future (FARC-EP and Cuentas Claras, [FARC-EP International] 2014; Horizonte Fariano 2010; Reincidentes Bta and FARC-EP 2017). The use of such language not only reflects the fact that the armed group has a peasant base, but it also underlines how the FARC-EP is committed to reflect the reality of this particular constituted group. The song *Campesino, Campesino* [Peasant, Peasant] by Lucas Iguarán (2009 [1989]) emphasises that the peasants are central to the struggle of the FARC-EP and symbols of the working people. He states that peasants should get better rewards for their work and are being fooled by the government. By showing sympathies for the condition of peasants, the singer contributes to the constitution of the peasantry as a group enabling it to see itself as such and providing an opportunity for the FARC-EP to claim that it represents its interests.

Another way to legitimise the authority of the armed group over the population is to embed its cultural production in pre-existing meanings and culture to which people can relate to (Hoffman 2015; Mampilly 2015). *Fariano* cultural production draws from different regional cultures of Colombia highlighting how the FARC-EP wants to be recognised not only as a guerrilla but also

as part of the Colombian people. For instance, members of the FARC-EP cultural delegation participating in the *San Pedro* festivities in Neiva in 2017 expressed that they wanted to show people in the city that the guerrilla was full of artistic talent. At different events, they wore the distinct clothes for the festivities, performed the *Sanjuanero*, a typical dance of the Huila region, and even elected their own popular queen. This example and other manifestations of local folklore in *Fariano* culture can be seen as a form of metaphor where the armed group embeds its political movement within the Colombian context (Bolívar Ramírez 2017). The FARC-EP also has a wide repertoire of musical genres including *vallenato*, *cumbia*, *musica llanera*, *bambucos*, and more which all express the diversity of Colombia's musical landscape. In 2009, the FARC-EP notably launched an album which remakes different popular Colombian songs (Bolívar Ramírez 2017). Among the different cover songs produced by the FARC-EP throughout its history, one striking example of the embeddedness of the political message in local folklore is the reinterpretation of the song *La Guaneña* by *Los Compañero* (2012 [n.d.]). *La Guaneña* is an emblematic *bambuco* song from Pasto in the department of Nariño considered an important part of the Colombian folkloric official corpus (Romero 2012). The original song tells the story of a woman (the *Guaneña*) with a subversive behaviour as she fools her lover. The song was later appropriated by military organisations as an hymn to celebrate military triumphs in the 19th century (Romero 2012). In their version, *Los Compañeros* (2012) relate how *la Guaneña* joined the FARC-EP and its leader Manuel Marulanda, "climbing the mountain range in the popular offensive." By presenting the *Guaneña* as fighting alongside the FARC-EP, the group legitimises its struggle in reference to an important national symbol of military victory and subversion.

Conclusion

The present article draws on the relational approach to armed groups legitimacy to illustrate that music production in the FARC-EP is a legitimation practice. Music production conveys the belief of the internal legitimacy of the guerrilla by representing the Secretariat as having legitimate authority over fighters and aiming to make fighters internalise the group's internal social order. Externally it enables the group to position itself as a rightful alternative to the established order and conveys the message that it can talk on behalf of different groups within Colombian society.

The article sought to study the role of cultural practices in the legitimation of armed groups. The study also has implications for the cultural turn in the study of armed groups (Brenner 2018; Hegghammer 2017) their relation to social orders (Förster 2015; Schlichte 2009) and rebel practices and governance more generally (Hoffman 2015; Kasfir 2015; Mampilly 2015). Studying culture provides insights on these actors' worldviews and mindsets, thus enhancing our understanding of what constitutes life in an armed group and how they can sustain their movement over time (Hegghammer 2017). The analysis did not assess the extent to which FARC-EP music resonates amongst civilians in different parts of Colombia. However, the fact that the FARC-EP uses music production in different aspects of its internal and public life suggest that rebel culture is a significant aspect of the constitution of the armed group. The use of cultural production in other armed groups (Brenner, 2018; Lahoud, 2017; Nuxoll, 2015) and crime syndicates (Campbell 2014) underscores that the dynamics outlined in this study can help shed light on other cases.

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